IN THE CLAIMS:

Cancel claims 7, 13-15, 17, and 29-33 without prejudice or disfavor.

Amend claims 1-6, 8-12, 16, 18-20, 28, and 34-35 as follows:

1. Isolated viral interleukin-6 (v-IL-6) obtained by recombinant expression of the DNA of human herpes virus type 8 ("HHV-8") in an isolated cell.

2. An isolated polypeptide obtained by recombinant expression of the DNA of HHV-8, and which comprises the amino acid sequence of SED ID NO:2 in an isolated cell.

3. An isolated polypeptide having the amino acid sequence of SEQ ID NO:2.

4. A fragment of v-IL-6 that binds an interleukin-6 ("IL-6") receptor and comprises the amino acid sequence (residues 87-105 of SEQ ID NO:2) GFNETSCLKKLADGFFEFE.

5. A fragment as claimed in claim 4, which essentially comprises the amino acid sequence GFNETSCLKKLADGFFEFE.

6. A fragment as claimed in claim 4, which binds to a human IL-6 receptor.

8. A fragment obtained from the v-IL-6 of claim 1 that binds to the IL-6 receptor and can competitively inhibit the biological activity of IL-6 in a suitable assay system wherein the fragment binds to the receptor.

9. An isolated nucleic acid molecule coding consisting of the sequence of SEQ ID NO:1 and coding for v-IL-6, which is obtainable by recombinant expression of the DNA of human herpes virus type-8 (HHV-8) in an isolated cell.

10. An isolated nucleic acid molecule consisting of the sequence of SEQ ID NO:2 and coding for a polypeptide, which is obtainable by recombinant expression of the DNA of HHV-8 in an isolated cell and which comprises the amino acid sequence of SEQ ID NO:2.

11. An isolated nucleic acid consisting of the nucleotide sequence of SEQ ID NO: 1.

12. An isolated nucleic acid molecule, hybridizing under stringent conditions to the nucleic acid as claimed in claim 11, encoding functional v-IL-6, wherein the nucleic acid encodes functional v-IL-6.

16. A test kit for the detection of v-IL-6 DNA or RNA, comprising a nucleic acid molecule consisting of the sequence of SEQ ID NO:1 as claimed in claim 11.

18. A composition comprising as an active ingredient the polypeptide as claimed in claim 2 and a pharmaceutically acceptable carrier.

19. A composition comprising as an active ingredient the nucleic acid as claimed in claim 11 and a pharmaceutically acceptable carrier.

20. A cell culture growth medium, comprising v-IL-6 as claimed in claim 1.